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On Twitter, Comments by Basketball Players Are Gleeful

By **KEN BELSON**

In an age when technology has all but erased anonymity, [Twitter](#) has turned into the microphone of choice for those who want a voice. Within hours of the handshake agreement early Saturday that all but ended the nearly five-month [N.B.A.](#) lockout, players started posting messages to express their relief and happiness.

“Just wanna say Thank You to the fans for your patience and understanding thru all this,” Knicks forward [Carmelo Anthony](#) (@carmeloanthony) wrote. “Glad to give you the game of basketball back.”

[Kevin Durant](#) (@KDTrey5) of the Oklahoma City Thunder appeared ready to celebrate by making his feelings permanent: “Mannnn im bouta to get a ratchet tattoo on my ribs that say ‘survived the nba lockout in 2011.’ ”

About 430 players must still ratify the deal, which calls for an even split of the league’s \$4 billion in annual revenue between the players and the owners and an array of changes aimed at shrinking the gap between the wealthiest and the poorest teams. Before a vote, though, both sides must dispose of pending lawsuits, and the players must reconstitute their union, steps that are likely to happen in the next few days.

The players will also review the agreement, something [Jason Richardson](#) (@jrich23), an Orlando Magic guard, warned his colleagues to take seriously. “Glad lockout is almost over, but I hope each player read the fine print and make the right decision with their mind and not their heart,” he wrote.

Still, dozens of players’ comments amounted to an early straw poll, and a proxy for the likelihood of their ratifying the agreement. Although they represent a subset of opinions, the comments suggest that the owners need not worry much that the players will reject the deal.

[Anthony Tolliver](#) (@ATolliver44), a Minnesota Timberwolves forward, seemed to speak for many players when he wrote, “this is not a GREAT deal but good enough to play.” [Shane Battier](#) (@ShaneBattier), a Memphis Grizzlies forward, wrote that he was “Happy to start talking hoops instead of legal terms.”

The players' use of Twitter could turn out to be a double-edged sword, one that may be hard to put back in its sheath. On one hand, it gives the players, rookies and veterans alike, a chance to be heard; they no longer have to rely on their negotiating leaders to speak for them. On the other hand, the cacophony of voices may drown out those of the players' chosen representatives.

"The players are now stampeding out the door to play, undercutting the ability of the union leaders," said James Katz, the director of the Center for Mobile Communication Studies at Rutgers University. Those leaders "lose their credibility and authority when representing their views to the owners," he added.

Notably, most players, at least on Twitter, did not express their feelings about the terms of the deal, only their excitement at going back to work, a suggestion that they would approve the proposed agreement.

LeBron James (@[KingJames](#)) of the Miami Heat wrote, "I feel like my kids on X-mas day!"

[Jeff Green](#) (@unclejeffgreen), a Boston Celtics forward, told his followers he "just had a big bowl of Fruit Loops to celebrate this lock-out ending." [Deron Williams](#) (@DeronWilliams), the Nets guard who has played in Turkey during the lockout, appeared ready to head for the airport. "Guess ill be going home soon #[LockoutOver](#)!" he wrote. "My time in Istanbul w/ Besiktas was amazing thanks for everything!"

Young players appeared particularly eager. [Travis Leslie](#) (@FlightLeslie23), a Los Angeles Clippers rookie, wrote, "Crying tears of joy!" [Vernon Macklin](#) (@vernon_macklin), a Detroit Pistons rookie, wrote, "So uhhh.... when do I get to start my new job?" [Landry Fields](#) (@landryfields), a second-year Knicks guard, wrote, "On a brighter note, America's unemployment rate just lowered."

Joking aside, the owners' and players' struggle to divide \$4 billion grated on many fans trying to keep jobs and pay bills. Indeed, while the players prepare to suit up, one unresolved question is how fans will react, particularly those who swore off the N.B.A. during the lockout.

Because the schedule is being reformulated, it is too early to gauge how much fans will be willing to spend for seats, ticket brokers say. But if there was a silver lining to the lockout, it was that it eliminated the first two months of the season, when basketball has a hard time competing with college and professional football.

As Jason Berger, a managing partner at [AllShows.com](#), a large ticket reseller, said, "They are heading into a time where they don't have a lot of competition, which is good for them."

